

Teaching Observation and Peer Review Policy

Teaching Observation and Peer Review are key mechanisms for ensuring that students experience the best possible opportunities to learn and succeed in their chosen subject. These processes are driven by an underpinning commitment to the delivery of excellent learning and teaching and the continuous enhancement of teaching excellence. This is not only the right thing to do, but also aligns with the expectations of high quality teaching embedded in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the metrics related to the National Student Survey (NSS) metrics therewithin.

Teaching Observation and Peer Review provide a means to:

- Identify good practice for wider dissemination.¹
- Identify excellent practitioners with potential for further professional development. This might include encouraging applications for internal Learning and Teaching Fellowship and National Teaching Fellowship and/or soliciting their input to the development of other staff through delivery of CPD seminars and contribution to staff conferences and Learning and Teaching Days.
- Identify poor practice and facilitate its improvement through opportunities for support, challenge, and professional development.
- Provide evidence of robust quality assurance to the OfS, Ofsted² and other external agencies including Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies of the University's commitment to enhance learning, teaching, assessment, and other practices linked to students' learning.

There are two processes that facilitate an ongoing monitoring of teaching quality: Teaching Observation and Peer Review.

Teaching Observation

Formal teaching observation is linked to probation and performance review. HoDs are responsible for teaching quality and staff development and as part of the overall quality monitoring process. They should therefore ensure they have mechanisms in place to satisfy themselves of the quality of teaching in their Department. This should, as a minimum include:

Probation: HoDs or their designated representative should observe the teaching of all staff as part of their probationary assessment of new staff. All staff teaching or facilitating learning, including associate lecturers and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), should have their teaching observed within the department.

¹ In the first instance this may be through informal means and/or departmental committees but may also be referred to Faculty or University committees, e.g., the Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC) for wider internal dissemination. Opportunities for external dissemination may typically include professional associations, journal publication and conference attendance, etc.

² <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>, www.ofsted.gov.uk/.

Performance Review: To protect the quality of the students' learning experience, HoDs use feedback from programme/module evaluations and surveys, external examiner reports³ and other consultative processes to identify potential risk/s in teaching practices and to initiate a plan of remedial action. Teaching observation by the HoD or their designated representative is an essential part of this process and would be arranged, as appropriate, at local level. It can also be a vehicle for sharing good practices and celebrating success.

All staff must participate in the University's performance review process, which is informed by feedback on teaching. As part of this process, departments should have documented arrangements for supporting teachers whose teaching is deemed to be unsatisfactory, which clearly links to the University's performance review process.⁴ Managers and academic staff should also ensure that full attention is given to the longer-term imperatives of supporting engagement with their wider academic communities (other HEIs, subject associations, professional bodies, etc.) and the research and scholarly activity that necessarily underpins their responsibilities for learning and teaching, and for curriculum development.

To satisfy the University of the quality of teaching undertaken by academic partners (e.g., franchise arrangements⁵), Faculties/departments should routinely review academic partners' teaching observation processes to ensure they remain sufficient or whether additional review mechanisms are required.

Peer Review

This focuses specifically on enhancement of teaching and learning, making it distinct from the quality assurance monitoring process detailed above. Review and enhancement of learning and teaching is invariably most productive when it is carried out in a developmental fashion by academic peers. It is also most effective in achieving the above aims if it includes all of those who teach students, which may include staff in appropriate learning support roles. It is important that observers have the necessary knowledge and skills to make sound judgements about the quality of teaching and be able to give high-quality and developmental feedback; wherever possible, peer review of teaching should be constructive with areas of commendation or improvement highlighted. It is not the reviewer's role to tell colleagues how to teach or to impose their own working methods, but rather to engage in developmental dialogue before and following review.

To make this process effective, training and guidelines will be available to all staff involved in peer review activity. Training can be accessed via the CLT professional development series or locally, where appropriate, and Faculties will make all documents relating to the process available for guidance. HoDs are ultimately responsible for teaching quality and staff development and ensuring that staff engage with appropriate training. Consequently, their receipt of peer review records can be valuable both for the advancement of taught provision within the department and for the individual and collective development of staff.

³ See QMH Chapter 2.

⁴ See <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/humanresources/Forms%2C+Policies+and+Documents>.

⁵ See QMH Chapter 5.

Specifically: Faculties will determine their own processes for the operation of peer review and enhancement of learning and teaching, however as a minimum they must:

a) Have a clear rubric for observation and feedback. This should include, but is not limited to, a focus on the following:

- How engaging was the session overall?
- How intellectually stimulating was the session?
- How academically challenging was the session and how well were concepts/ideas/theories/tasks explained?
- Were students given an opportunity to apply their learning and, if appropriate, was there evidence that students were building upon skills and knowledge?

b) Provide access to local or central training for observation.

c) Publish a timetable for observations so that the process may be monitored by managers.

d) Have systems for capturing the outcomes of the observation and for reporting these to the HoD, with a particular focus on good practice and dissemination.

f) Have processes for disseminating good practice and commit to communicating disseminatable practice to the CLT.

e) Have mechanisms for reporting generic and specific professional development needs for action by the CLT where they cannot be easily provided locally, or where collaborative support is required.

Further advice and guidance on the development and operation of teaching review is available from the CLT on request and from Faculty Teaching and Learning Leads, Senior Learning and Teaching Fellowship Leads and Senior SOLSTICE Fellowship Leads.

January, 2023.